

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Tri State Foam Products Inc.

Virginia's A.L. Philpott Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Tri State Foam Products Enhances Workforce Performance

Client Profile:

Tri State Foam Products Inc. manufactures and fabricates polystyrene foam sheet and shaped products for the construction, pharmaceutical, and packaging industries. Founded in 1983, Tri State Foam Products is a family owned business located in Martinsville, Virginia. The facility employs approximately 50 workers at its single location.

Situation:

Tri State Foam Products (TSF) has seen steady sales increases in recent years. The owners are proud of the company's good reputation for fast service and delivery and high quality products. TSF executives became aware that supervisors needed to take more initiative in leading their teams; TSF teams should strive to constantly improve, not just maintain, their levels of customer responsiveness, quality, and productivity. Many of TSF's supervisors are young and have minimal training. TSF knew it could benefit from additional leadership training and contacted Virginia's A.L. Philpott Manufacturing Extension Partnership (VPMEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for assistance.

Solution:

VPMEP introduced a supervisory training program entitled "Leadership Foundations: A Dialogue at the Front"™ by Emily Sterrett. This 24-session program is aimed at supporting a culture of increasing responsibility and teamwork among supervisors and within teams. Although VPMEP typically facilitates this program, TSF wanted to use internal resources to facilitate. Through a series of on-site meetings, a VPMEP project manager and a trained facilitator for the program coached Kathy Joyce, TSF's human resource manager, through the facilitation process. During the program's duration, the VPMEP project manager and Emily Sterrett were available to provide ongoing guidance and support.

Supervisors and their teams have utilized the training as a very positive vehicle for communications. Now, employees do not bring problems to management unless they also bring solutions. TSF saw a dramatic reduction in turnover, along with corresponding improvements in employee morale, supervisors' relationships with direct reports, problem solving amongst teams, and trust between management and employees.

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Results:

Trained all company employees in teamwork and communications.

Trained an internal program facilitator.

Improved employee morale and team communications.

Reduced employee turnover.

Testimonial:

“This leadership training program [offered by Virginia's A.L. Philpott Manufacturing Extension Partnership] was well received by our front line supervisors. The content is very focused on ‘real world’ solutions that can be applied immediately to our work environment. It’s not just a ‘canned’ product that presents idealistic theories that will never be put to use. The self-assessment was a very practical tool, which allowed individual supervisors to measure themselves from the beginning to program completion.”

Kathy Joyce, Human Resources Manager